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Ontario. [Commissions and committees
of inquiry] Committee on uniform
building standards for Ontario.

Statement by Hon. W. Darcy
McKeough, Min. of Municipal affairs.
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DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

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Ontario [Commissions and committees of inquiry]

STATEMENT BY :

THE HONOURABLE W. DARCY McKEOUGH

MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

RE :

COMMITTEE ON UNIFORM BUILDING STANDARDS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1970.

You will recall my statement in the Legislature announcing the appointment of a committee to study and report on the feasibility of uniform building standards throughout Ontario.

This followed debate and discussion privately and through the news media and culminated in a resolution to the Legislature by James W. Snow, M.P.P. Halton East. In his presentation, Mr. Snow urged the adoption of The National Building Code of Canada and the standardization of building, fire and safety legislation for all municipalities in Ontario.

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Just to refresh your memory, the committee was chaired by C. D. Carruthers and the members were Messrs. P. M. Keenleyside, G. L. Duff, G. H. Fleming, J.G. Hooper, W. McCance, D. B. McDougall, I. R. Robertson, L. Sage, F. Scholfield and S. F. Smith. Dr. R. F. Legget, chairman of the Associate Committee on the National Building Code of Canada, was an adviser.

Since their appointment, the members have diligently studied the feasibility of uniform standards and have now presented their report, which I am pleased to release today to all who have a direct interest in this subject.

The committee is to be commended for its zeal and dedication in examining the question of uniform building standards without restraint of either current legislative authority or existing systems of administration.

The views of all Ontario municipalities were sought by means of a questionnaire and briefs were invited from forty organizations associated with the manufacture and use of building materials and products.

Replies were received from 648 municipalities and twenty-nine briefs were forwarded to the committee -- a very good response. Of the municipalities replying, almost sixty per cent report the use of the National Building Code as their building by-law and a further twenty per cent report having a building by-law in force. Only fifteen municipalities report not having a building inspector.

I was somewhat surprised to learn that eighty-seven and one-half per cent of the population of the province live in the municipalities where building by-laws are in force. However, no attempt was made to assess the quality of these by-laws; I assume that many need to be expanded and others need updating.

The consensus obtained by the committee was that the province should have uniform building standards. If there is any disagreement, it is not whether but how to achieve uniformity. The committee itself concluded that the National Building Code should be adopted throughout Ontario.

I am well aware that there are those who believe strongly that the 1970 version of the National Building Code will be suitable without any changes to it. There are also those who believe, just as strongly, that certain parts of the code are unsuitable. Some of the objections are valid but some do not seem to withstand close scrutiny.

Realizing the need for resolution of all supportable opinions, the committee has recommended a period of transition from the current system of individual and different building by-law standards to a fully operational system of uniform standards for building construction.

During the interim period, necessary standards not now in the code will be prepared together with other required changes. While this is being done, it is the conclusion of the committee that the 1970 version of the National Building Code should be put in force throughout the province by January 1971. Municipalities should be permitted to include in a separate supplement standards they believe are necessary, but that are not now included in the NBC. It should not be long before the need for a supplement will disappear.

A number of matters arising from the report have to be studied immediately. These include:

- one: the need for agreement on uniform standards
 by all interests
- two: the best means to attain uniform
 interpretation of the standards
- three: a review of existing product performance
 standards and test procedures and establish-
 ment of standards and procedures for all new
 building materials, components and systems
 for which such performance standards and
 test procedures have not been prepared
- four: the need for an approvals agency to quickly
 certify new materials, components and systems
 that meet preceding standards.
- five: the need for a structure to deal with
 amendments and revisions to the National
 Building Code
- six: the nature and responsibility of a training
 program for building inspectors.

You will find the recommendations of the committee on all of these points in the report.

Without positive action, the benefits of uniform building standards may never be realized. Because they do not seem to be fully appreciated, I would like to outline the major benefits of a system of uniform building standards.

- it would provide an opportunity for the development of an industry capable of producing buildings of architectural quality on a mass volume basis.
- new materials, components and systems, the old ones used in new ways, can readily be measured against performance standards and thus introduced more easily than at present.
- the range of inventories of building suppliers could be reduced considerably.
- there would be a greater production capability.

- longer construction periods would be possible due to a reduction in on-site construction and there would be less reliance on good building weather.
- although other costs can have a significant effect on the price of a finished building, the actual unit cost of a building would very likely be lowered.

I mentioned the use of product performance standards and this to me represents an especially significant advantage because of the tremendous flexibility it offers. Manufacturers, suppliers, users and inspectors will have much more scope following a code that stresses the fitness requirements of material -- any material -- to do a given job rather than one which demands the use of certain materials in a specific way -- as most by-laws today do.

These advantages could be further extended through consistent research into building needs -- housing in particular -- and the programming of building production.

Imagine coupling a system of uniform building standards with modular co-ordination, a metric system of measurement and with demountable and portable buildings! These are possibilities we cannot ignore because of their benefits for us all.

The dynamic growth of this province is going to continue. The goal of uniform building standards is a prerequisite to the full and unimpeded development of our technological capability to satisfy the shelter needs of industry, commerce and, most importantly, the families of Ontario.

Realizing uniformity of building standards will not sacrifice variety of design. It will produce order and flexibility where confusion and rigidity now exist -- but only with close liaison and considerable co-operation between the private and public sectors of our economy.

The committee members were selected to represent the significant interests that would be affected by the introduction of uniform building standards. Their recommendations have such far-reaching implications that I have decided to circulate copies to all municipalities and to interested

organizations for comment to be made to me by about the first of April.

One committee recommendation that I would refer you to is that the actual enforcement of building by-laws should be a responsibility of local government, or of a county government, rather than of the province, except where assistance is required.

The report also visualizes a much more responsible and cohesive role for the province in the administration of a uniform code. While the committee on Uniform Building Standards recommends that the Department of Municipal Affairs assume the provincial responsibility, it is my belief that the government should give careful examination to every possible alternative.

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